

R. EUGENE RICE

## From Athens and Berlin to LA

# Faculty Work &

FEATURED TOPIC

IN SEARCHING FOR AN IMAGE that would best catch the future role of faculty in a changing, vibrant democracy, I—following the lead of Ralph Waldo Emerson—have often referred to “the new American scholar” (Rice 1991). That vision now has lost its resonance; the image has been seriously tarnished in the new global environment and become restricting. In probing for an alternative I have turned to Los Angeles, not because LA is an American city, but because it is an international—a transnational—city. LA is, as the University of Southern California boasts on its Web page, a “global city, the city of the future of the planet.” One visit and you are struck by the rich, pulsating diversity—a stimulating cultural mosaic. But LA is also the template for unplanned, sprawling, privatized growth; it is denigrated as the city with the largest number of backyard swimming pools and the smallest number of public parks. A city on the verge of gridlock, the

City of Angels is the place to encounter examples of the world’s best music, art, and architecture. LA represents

the kind of dramatic change and promise the academy of the future will be called upon to address and serve.

In examining the role of faculty in the new academy, I want to underscore the significance of the changes taking place. Faculty, particularly, are prone to dismiss the changes they see coming as cyclical—“we’ve seen that before”—and minimize their impact. I then want to address our approach to change. The additive or incremental approach to reform will no longer suffice; a more transformative way of thinking about faculty work is required. It is important to build on the strengths of our past, symbolized here by references to the contributions of Athens and Berlin, while simultaneously exploring new ways to organize faculty work for the future, symbolized by LA.

### Approaches to change

Following World War II, and particularly during the expansionist years of the 1960s, the major changes made in higher education in the United States were genuinely transformative. The California Master Plan under the leadership of Clark Kerr is one example of such comprehensive, holistic change. The explosive growth in community colleges across the country is another.

My own experience led me directly from graduate work at Harvard in 1964 to participate in the founding of Raymond College, an experimental college at the University of the Pacific. Those were exciting, heady times. Cluster colleges, as they were called, were erected from the ground up. They were living-learning communities in the fullest sense. Raymond College was intentionally patterned after Oxford and Cambridge: students graduated in three years; a complete liberal arts curriculum was required (one-third humanities, one-third social sciences, one-third math and natural sciences); there were no majors; and narrative evaluations were used instead of letter grades.

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# the New Academy



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While approaching change in a transformative way, the experimental colleges of the 1960s were, by and large, counterrevolutionary. They came into being in opposition to the dominance of the large research-oriented universities. They were opposed to the rise of an academic hegemony dominated by an increasingly professionalized, research-oriented, discipline-driven, specialized faculty. The counter-vision was a more intimate, democratic, student-oriented learning community. These institutions—365 by one count—were decidedly utopian and often naive in their assumptions. They took on an academic juggernaut

of enormous proportions and, in doing so, often met with defeat. Nonetheless, these experimental institutions launched the movement from teaching to learning that continues to have an impact on the academic environment and, particularly, the role of faculty.

The faculty who participated in the launching of the experimental colleges in the 1960s were part of a much larger cohort—a group of early-career faculty who shared a vision for higher education. They saw themselves not as independent scholars bent on hustling a burgeoning academic market—and there were jobs and opportunities aplenty—but as contributors



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to the building of institutions that would shape the future of higher education in the society. For their associational life, these faculty were attracted not as much to their disciplinary associations as to what was then the Association of American Colleges and the American Association for Higher Education. Many of these same people provided the leadership, ideas, and energy that drove the undergraduate education reform movements of subsequent decades.

In the 1970s, the approach to change shifted from building whole new institutions to reforming what was already in place. The movements to reform undergraduate education that

were launched in the last three decades of the twentieth century were creative, energetic, and initiated in response to serious needs. They were, however, added on at the margins and, in most places, conceptualized and organized to be institutionally peripheral. Every one of these initiatives was important and contributed something significant, beginning with faculty development and followed by the assessment movement, service learning, learning communities, technologically enhanced instruction, problem-based learning, diversity programs, and community-based research. In each case, the reform effort was usually sustained at the margins of the institution and, therefore, created serious problems for faculty—especially the junior faculty most excited about participating in the change initiative.

In only a few places have these important reforms been integrated into the central mission of the institution, structured into the reward system, and built into the life of the departments regarded by most faculty as their institutional home. The additive approach has been utilized so often that, for some faculty, the term “reform” has been sullied; it is viewed as another task imposed by the provost or dean. For that cohort of faculty involved in the experimental colleges of the 1960s, being involved in more holistic changes provided the excitement and the challenge of being in higher education. The more recent approach to change has made innovative reform initiatives distractions from what is perceived as central and genuinely valued in a professional career.

### Athens

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2005) recently asked students from six leading liberal arts colleges to rank, first, their own educational goals and, second, their perceptions of the goals of their institutions. The students reported that their primary goal in attending college was “learning to find happiness.” Of seventeen items, the goal ranked at the bottom was “a broad liberal arts education.” At the same time, when asked about their perceptions of the goals of their institutions, the students put “a broad liberal arts education” at or near the top. What is striking is that these students saw no connection between “learning to find happiness” and a “broad liberal arts education.”



For the ancient Athenian philosophers to whom we look for much of our understanding of what we regard as quality education, the connection between liberal education and “learning to find happiness” was central. This was particularly true for Aristotle. For Aristotle—and later for Thomas Jefferson, who used Aristotle’s phrase “the pursuit of happiness” in this nation’s Declaration of Independence—happiness had a much broader meaning than it has now. In fairness to the students interviewed as part of Csikszentmihalyi’s study, we need to acknowledge that the meaning of the term happiness has been allowed to degenerate into a subjective feeling of momentary pleasure. Happiness was, for the ancient Athenian philosophers, the highest good (*eudaimonia*); it was the deep sense of satisfaction that comes with the development of our uniquely human capacities. Happiness, for Aristotle, meant “a complete life led in accordance with virtue”; “the highest of all goods achievable by action”; “the supreme end to which we aspire” (O’Toole 2005, 28–30). All of these meanings are congruent with the most fundamental purposes of a liberal education, yet as Csikszentmihalyi’s student interviews indicate, we obviously have failed to make the connection.

In *Orators and Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education* (1986), Bruce Kimball argues that out of ancient Athens came two traditions that shape the work of faculty in liberal education. The first is the tradition of the philosophers, which holds that the pursuit of knowledge is the highest good (Socrates and Plato). The second focuses on the development of character and the building of community through the cultivation of leadership (Cicero). These two traditions persist today and, presently, divide faculty committed to taking the liberal arts seriously.

I recently participated in a Wingspread conference titled “Religion and Public Life: Engaging Higher Education.” We began with research from the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California–Los Angeles that shows that a large percentage of students want to address questions of meaning and purpose, but also that students perceive that faculty are hesitant to engage larger religious and spiritual questions (Astin et al. 2005). In the subsequent discussion, the classical division between the philosophers and orators surfaced.

Thoughtful religious studies faculty argued that the key function of the professor is the pursuit of knowledge, and the cultivation of the skills that requires, unencumbered with responsibilities for character development and civic engagement. They argued persuasively that the new breed of “change agents” ought to leave them free to pursue their subject matter, that the open discussion of carefully chosen texts will raise the larger questions of meaning. As examples, they cited Saul Bellow’s *Seize the Day*, Augustine’s *Confessions*, and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. As one professor put it, “we don’t want to be therapists or community organizers.”

On the other side, equally persuasive faculty contended that the professoriate needs to be attentive to what we are learning about learning, student development, and the power of actively engaged learning. They invoked the responsibilities of higher education in a diverse democracy. The two major thrusts of faculty work in liberal education—and their conflicts—were fully evident in this recent discussion. Much of our understanding of liberal education and the role of faculty continues to be solidly rooted in the scholarly traditions of ancient Athens.

### **Berlin**

The second city that fundamentally shaped our understanding of faculty work is Berlin. Toward the latter part of the nineteenth century, a radically new approach to scholarship was imported from Germany and profoundly influenced the conception of the faculty role in the new American university. The understanding of what was to be regarded as scholarly work narrowed and began to be defined as specialized, discipline-based research. With the conceptual shift came a new organizational structure of graduate education with its research laboratories and specialized seminars. Newly organized disciplines and departments began to assume a dominant place in the new research universities. A powerful vision of the priorities of the professoriate began to take hold, one that has gathered strength and demonstrated enormous resilience over the years.

This vision was articulated best by Max Weber (1946) in a lecture entitled “Science as a Vocation,” which he delivered in 1918 at the University of Munich. Weber spoke of the “inner desire” that drives the scholar to the

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cutting edge of a field, and talked eloquently about the “ecstasy” that comes only to the specialist on the frontiers of knowledge who engages in advanced research. The assumption was that if the passion for research were pursued wholeheartedly, the quality of teaching and what we now call service would fall into place. The moral obligation of the teacher was, for Weber, “to ask inconvenient questions.”

After the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957 and the Cold War began to heat up, the infusion of federal funding for scientific research further constricted the dominant understanding of scholarly work. With the rapid expansion and affluence of colleges and universities during what is often referred to as the heyday of American higher education, a consensus emerged to form what I have described elsewhere as “the assumptive world of the academic professional” (1986). The central characteristics of that dominant professional image were the focus on research; the preservation of quality through peer review and the maintenance of professional autonomy; the pursuit of knowledge through the discipline; the establishment of reputations through international professional associations; and the accentuation of one’s specialization.

The consensus that formed around this set of values and commitments is still solidly engrained in graduate education and continues to shape the socialization of the new generations of faculty. At tenure and promotion time in much of higher education—and particularly in the most prestigious institutions—this assumptive world continues to be normative. It becomes particularly dominant when professional mobility emerges as a possibility, as is happening now in many fields. During the last three decades of the twentieth century, tremendous energy and extensive resources were poured into cultivating new priorities for faculty, and imaginative reform initiatives were launched across higher education. But the new efforts to reform undergraduate education were introduced on the margins of institutions—to be added onto what faculty were already doing.

A major study of faculty just launching their careers found that many are overwhelmed

(Rice, Sorcinelli, and Austin 2000). These early-career faculty are caught between the times; they have to meet the demands of the research-oriented “assumptive world,” while also responding to the attractions and demands of the new reform agenda.

Junior faculty consistently report having to cope with what they regard as “over-flowing plates.” As higher education begins to take seriously the demands for change in undergraduate education, early-career faculty are feeling extraordinary pressure and are beginning to question whether the career that has evolved is even viable. Questions are being raised about whether the best of a new generation can be attracted into the profession. We can no longer pursue an add-on approach to the changing faculty role; something more comprehensive is required.

### **Los Angeles**

While these changes in the academic profession and on campuses are taking place, the larger context within which faculty conduct their work is undergoing a major transformation. This brings us to the third city, Los Angeles. Kingsley Davis (1973) made a career of reminding us that “demography is destiny.” LA represents in a dramatic way the size and the complexity of the changes with which we have to grapple.

The sheer demographic pressures on higher education are startling—new students, new immigrant communities, new demands. The rich diversity found in places like the LA basin is emerging not only as a difficult challenge, but also as an opportunity. It is an educational value and a catalyst. Moreover, the majority of the nation’s students are first-generation learners. How do we prepare faculty to build on the vision of academic excellence? How do faculty prepare students for life in an inclusive democracy?

At the same time, we have moved into a global century. We are interdependent, whether we like it or not. To succeed in the twenty-first-century environment, graduates will need to be intellectually resilient, cross-culturally literate, technologically adept, and fully prepared for a future of continuous and cross-disciplinary learning. And yet, as Clifford



## The scholarship of integration is required to sustain liberal learning

Adelman (1999) has demonstrated, less than 10 percent of today's four-year graduates leave college globally prepared. What does all of this mean for faculty preparation?

The new context requires a rethinking of faculty work. The growth of nontenured full-time positions, the uses of adjunct faculty, and the demographic shifts in nontenured faculty—more female, diverse, and older—are the result of arbitrary, expedient, short-term decisions rather than thoughtful planning for a radically different future. The current generational change in the makeup of the American professoriate provides an extraordinary opportunity. We need to make sure that the changes are carefully planned and make for a coherent whole.

We already have shifted the focus from faculty to learning. Shaping an academic staff to prepare students for participation in an interdependent global community where innovation is vital for success presents a different kind of challenge.

Getting faculty to change the way they think about their work—moving from an individualistic approach (“my work”) to a more collaborative approach (“our work”)—is a critical transition that challenges deeply rooted

professional assumptions. Related to this is the call for “unbundling” the faculty role. I’ve resisted this development in the interest of the “complete scholar,” a concept that values

continuity and coherence, but I am losing the argument. What is already being called for are new “networks for learning” that will reach across academic staff and into the larger community. New ways of reintegrating what we have known in the past as faculty work will need to be developed.

Over the past several years, a tension has emerged between the established “collegial culture” among faculty and a growing “managerial culture” in our colleges and universities. Each culture is driven by an economy that exerts enormous power; on the collegial side is the prestige economy, and on the managerial side is the market economy. Rethinking faculty work and structuring academic work in a way that best serves a dynamic and responsive new academy will require addressing this tension and moving toward a more collaborative culture. The overpowering influences of both the prestige economy and the market economy must be superceded by a primary commitment to the kind of learning required for a knowledge-driven, interdependent world.

### Coalition on the Academic Workforce

The Coalition on the Academic Workforce was established in 1997 by a group of disciplinary and higher education associations, including AAC&U, concerned about the dramatic increase in “contingent,” or non-tenure-track, faculty appointments. Its purposes are

- to collect and disseminate information on the use of contingent faculty and the implications for students, parents, faculty members, and institutions;
- to articulate and clarify differences in the extent and consequences of changes in the faculty within and among the various academic disciplines and fields of study;
- to evaluate the short- and long-term consequences for society and the public good of changes in the academic workforce;
- to identify and promote strategies for solving the problems created by inappropriate uses of part-time, adjunct, and similar faculty appointments;
- to strengthen teaching and scholarship.

For more information, visit [www.academicworkforce.org](http://www.academicworkforce.org).

### The future of scholarship

As it is evolving, the broader conception of scholarship provides an opportunity to rethink the scholarly work of faculty in a way that is genuinely transformative and begins to address the scholarly needs of the LAs of the world. AAC&U has argued that narrow learning is not enough. I want to agree and add a necessary corollary: narrow scholarship is not enough. The scholarship of discovery is essential for a diverse and interdependent global community, but it is not enough. The scholarship of integration is required to sustain liberal learning. Thanks to the energetic leadership of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the scholarship of teaching and learning is now well established and is receiving widespread international attention.

The scholarship of engagement, which is only beginning to attract the attention it deserves, will require the greatest change in our thinking about what counts as scholarship. In the future, the walls of the academy will become increasingly permeable. Academics on the inside will be moving out into the larger world, and many on the outside will be moving in. There is serious concern about college and university faculty becoming disengaged, particularly at a time when knowledge creation is at the heart of economic development. Civic engagement and social responsibility can hardly be expected of the students of the future if faculty are not themselves engaged and responsible in their scholarly work.

In order for this form of scholarship to be taken seriously, the role of the scholar must change significantly. This will require a shift in our basic epistemological assumptions. No longer can we speak of the application of knowledge and assume that faculty in the university will generate new knowledge and apply it to the external world. Our understanding of who constitute peers for the peer review process will have to be reevaluated. The relationship between cosmopolitan knowledge and local knowledge will have to be reconsidered. Community-based research and the role of the public scholar will have to be viewed in a new light. We can no longer avoid honoring the wisdom of practice.

Ironically, in thinking about the scholarly work of faculty in this very programmatic, instrumental society, practice has been widely ignored, if not denigrated. Only recently, in

reading the reflections of the Beat poet Gary Snyder (1990) on the power of meditative practice in the Buddhist tradition, have I come to a fuller appreciation of practice. He writes: "Practice is the path.... Practice puts you out there where the unknown happens, where you encounter surprise." As colleges and universities struggle to take seriously the intellectual and social needs of the LAs of this world, we must be more open to the "surprise" that comes with practical engagement in this new global, diverse, interdependent context. □

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